

# WHAT'S *New*

in the Metropolitan Police Department



*A weekly update for residents, visitors,  
and workers in the District of Columbia*

*Friday, July 2, 2004*

## MPDC, OTHER AGENCIES INVESTIGATE DANGEROUS SERIAL BANK ROBBERY PATTERN

The MPDC is working with the FBI and Prince George's County Police in investigating a series of brazen bank robberies in the DC area, apparently carried out by the same group of heavily armed and masked gunmen. The latest incident occurred on Tuesday morning, June 29, when three men held up the SunTrust bank branch at 5000 Connecticut Avenue, NW. This was the sixth bank robbery since January 22—four in DC, two in Prince George's County—that have followed the same modus operandi. All of the robberies have occurred in the mid-morning hours. All involved at least three masked offenders armed with assault-style weapons. And in all instances, the offenders got away in a stolen vehicle, which was then abandoned and set on fire in a nearby neighborhood, as the offenders escaped in another vehicle. Police officials remain extremely concerned about the danger these offenders pose. Not only are they heavily armed, but they have also fired warning shots inside some of the banks and shot at Prince George's County officers who responded to one of the scenes. Residents are urged to be observant for any suspicious activity around banks or in neighborhoods where getaway vehicles may be staged, but under no circumstances should residents approach the offenders.



- ① Read the news release on the Connecticut Avenue bank robbery at:

<http://www.mpd.c.dc.gov/news/news.asp?sid=2767>

- ① Anyone with information is asked to call the MPDC at (202) 727-9099 or the FBI at (202) 278-2000.

## SERIOUS CRIME IN DC DECLINES 12 PERCENT DURING THE FIRST HALF OF 2004

Reports of serious crime in DC were down 12 percent during the first half of 2004 compared with the first six months of 2003, with reductions in all major crime categories, according to preliminary statistics from the MPDC. The largest reductions during the first half of this year were in homicides and sexual assaults, both of which declined 26 percent. When compared with the first half of 2003, total violent crime in DC was down 16 percent and property crime is down 11 percent during 2004. Preliminary data indicate crime was down in six of the seven police districts, with 6D (-24%) and 3D (-17%) recording the largest percentage decreases so far this year. Preliminary statistics for June 2004 show that overall crime was down 17 percent when compared with June 2003. Homicides were down 55 percent last month (from 22 to 10), while sexual assaults (-42%) and thefts from auto (-37%) also showed significant reductions.

- ① View the six-month preliminary crime statistics for each police district and the city as a whole at: [http://mpdc.dc.gov/info/districts/crstats\\_readthis.shtm](http://mpdc.dc.gov/info/districts/crstats_readthis.shtm)

## SEAT BELT USAGE RISES TO 87 PERCENT IN DC

Through a combination of tough laws and concerted educational and enforcement campaigns, DC continues to rank near the top of US jurisdictions in the percentage of motorists who use seat belts. The District Department of Transportation announced this week that DC's seat belt usage rate has risen from 85 percent in 2003 to 87 percent last year, one of the highest in the country. DDOT Director Dan Tangherlini said the increase demonstrates the effectiveness of DC's "Click It or Ticket" campaign. It combines aggressive enforcement by MPDC officers with an educational component that includes signs at major gateways into the District, message boards and a concentrated media campaign. DC has the most comprehensive seat belt laws in the country, with a fine of \$50 and two driver's license points for violators. Seat belts are required in all seating positions with the driver responsible for ensuring that all passengers are buckled-up. DC's recently updated child passenger restraint law requires all children under the age of 8 to be in an age-appropriate child safety or booster seat. Seat belt usage rates in DC are calculated based on observations conducted by the University of the District of Columbia, through a contract with DDOT.

- ① For more information about DC's seat belt laws and the "Click It or Ticket" campaign, go to:  
<http://mpdc.dc.gov/info/traffic/clickit.shtm>

## SUSPECT ARRESTED IN SERIES OF OFFICE BURGLARIES

Third District detectives this arrested and charged a man suspected of stealing laptop computers and other electronic devices in a series of office building burglaries in the downtown DC area. During the past three months, some 40 burglaries of office buildings have occurred in the commercial areas of 3D and 1D. Stolen in these burglaries were items such as laptop computers, cell phones, personal data assistants, desktop computers, as well as cash and credit cards from unattended wallets or purses. On Wednesday, June 30, 3D detectives, armed with an arrest warrant charging Burglary II in five cases, arrested 37-year-old Richard Williams, of the 1400 block of Rhode Island Avenue, NW. His arrest was the result of an investigation by 3D detectives, with the assistance of the United States Secret Service. The investigation into the series of burglaries is continuing.

- ① Read the full news release at:  
<http://www.mpdc.dc.gov/news/news.asp?sid=2768>

- ① Anyone with information about these burglaries is asked to call 3D detectives at (202) 673-6914.

- ① For safety tips on safeguarding your laptops computer from theft, visit:  
[http://mpdc.dc.gov/info/consumer/laptop\\_theft.shtm](http://mpdc.dc.gov/info/consumer/laptop_theft.shtm)

## NEWS & NOTES

**Distracted Driving Law in Effect.** Motorists are reminded that talking on a hand-held mobile telephone while driving is now illegal in DC. Use of mobile phones with a hands-free accessory is allowed under the law. During the month of July, MPDC officers will be issuing warnings only. But beginning August 1, violators face a \$100 fine. Get details at <http://mpdc.dc.gov/info/traffic/distracteddriver.shtm>.

**Summer Curfew Hours.** The MPDC reminds young people and their families that the summer curfew hours are now in effect. During the months of July and August only, curfew for young people under the age of 17 begins at 12:01 am, nights a week, and lasts until 6 am the following morning. During the other 10 months of the year, curfew begins an hour earlier, at 11 pm, on Sunday through Thursday nights. Details at <http://mpdc.dc.gov/info/family/curfew.shtm>.

**Sign Up for News Release Updates.** Want to keep up with the latest news from the MPDC? You can now sign up to receive email alerts on news releases posted to the MPDC News Room. To register, go to <http://www.dc.gov/registration/register.asp>.

### DATA BOX

Homicides (as of 7/2/04)

- 2004: 91
- 2003: 123
- % Change: -26.0%
- Closure Rate: 56.0% (51 closures)

Adult Arrests (week end. 6/26/04)

- Total: 945
- Drugs: 174
- Weapons: 13
- Motor Vehicle Theft: 11
- Prostitution/Sex Offenses: 31

Firearm Recoveries (as of 6/30/04)

- June: 153
- 2004 Total: 1,046

Traffic Fatalities (as of 7/2/04)

- 2004: 27
- 2003: 31
- % Change: -12.9%

Information, ideas, or comments about this service? Send an e-mail to **KEVIN MORISON**, MPDC's Director of Corporate Communications, at [kevin.morison@dc.gov](mailto:kevin.morison@dc.gov). Would you like to have this information e-mailed to you? Just go to our Website and register with **Crimereports.com**.

**mpdc.dc.gov**